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INTERDEPARTMENTAL MEMORANDUM  
CITY OF JERSEY CITY  
DIVISION OF URBAN RESEARCH AND DESIGN

DATE: JUNE 27, 1989

TO: DISTRIBUTION

FROM: RICHARD BASS, DIRECTOR, URBAN RESEARCH & DESIGN

SUBJECT: JERSEY CITY MASTER PLAN

The City of Jersey City is now in the process of preparing a master plan. This plan is intended to guide development and promote public health, safety and general welfare by defining a vision for the City's future and exploring the options and strategies necessary to make that vision a reality.

There are many reasons for undertaking this endeavor. First, a current master plan is required by law for every municipality in New Jersey. Not only does this plan guide land use policies, it also contains the goals and objectives on housing, infrastructure, historic preservation, community facilities such as schools and public safety and more. A current master plan is also necessary for a municipality to have a valid Zoning Ordinance. Jersey City has not had a master plan since 1966 when The City: A Time For Change was adopted. Much has happened in the 23 years following that plan, making the present effort even more urgent.

In order to begin the process of dialogue so necessary for such a document to reflect the broad range of interests and concerns in the City, the Division of Urban Research and Design has put together a report summarizing some of the issues to be addressed. This is by no means the complete list of issues nor are all points of view necessarily reflected here. We are working to add to and refine this list while also analyzing the impact of different policy options. Your contribution in this process is most welcome. As public meetings are held in the months ahead, we trust you, together with your neighbors and associates, will lend your ideas and suggestions to this Plan thus making it truly representative of the entire community.

Please address your comments to my attention.

RB/BS

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# **Jersey City Master Plan: An Issues Summary**

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**A Report to the Planning Board  
June 20, 1989**

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**Prepared by:**  
**Department of Housing & Economic Development**  
**Division of Urban Research & Design**

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БИБЛІОТЕКА  
ВІД МАРІЯМ

Ім'я відоме як  
Учителька земель

Бібліотека земель  
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Бібліотека

Ім'я відоме як  
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Jersey City has  
not had an  
official  
comprehensive  
plan since 1966.

## INTRODUCTION

The future of Jersey City lies in the ability of its people to define a vision of what the City might be and decide the best methods to make that vision a reality. To do this a plan is necessary; a plan to express not only general themes but specific strategies. In New Jersey this is known as a **Master Plan**. Required by law, a master plan is designed to be an advisory blueprint for a municipality in order "...to guide the use of lands within the municipality in a manner which protects public health and safety and promotes the general welfare." (NJSA) 40:55D-28)

Done properly, a master plan brings into focus those issues which shape a community's future. Together, the entire community can address questions such as:

- What is the desired amount and location for development within the community?
- What are the needs of the community in terms of housing, jobs, education, health, public safety, recreation and all the factors which make up the quality of life?
- What is the condition of the roads, the sewers, the streets and bridges, and what level of investment is necessary to maintain, improve or expand this infrastructure?
- What measures are necessary to protect valuable natural resources such as environmentally sensitive land, air, and water?

These and related questions take on an added dimension in an environment like Jersey City, with its many opportunities and its persistent problems. The City is at a stage where a complete examination of its recent past and a full consideration of its future are essential.



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There are other reasons for this endeavor as well.

First, a master plan is required by state law in New Jersey in order to have a valid zoning ordinance. Because zoning helps shape the character of a community, that community must first establish its direction and needs. The master plan, adopted by the Planning Board, is the vehicle for this. As stated in the Municipal Land Use Law, a zoning ordinance "...shall be substantially consistent with the land use plan element and the housing plan element of the master plan or designed to effectuate such plan elements..." (NJSA 40:55D-28) The Jersey City Master Plan Review, completed in 1984 supported this conclusion.

A master plan also includes a Housing Element. This section is designed to carry out the mandate of New Jersey's Fair Housing Act which, through the administrative body known as the Council On Affordable Housing, works to ensure that all municipalities provide housing for low and moderate income households.

A third reason for such a plan is to foster coordination with county and state efforts. Hudson County is now in the process of drafting a county-wide plan and the State Planning Commission has already released its State Development and Redevelopment Plan. The success of the state-wide plan will be measured, in part, to the degree it reflects the aspirations of New Jersey's 567 municipalities and 21 counties. The state plan is particularly significant for Jersey City because it recommends that resources be directed to the state's urban areas. With a well-prepared agenda for its future, including a complete capital improvement plan, Jersey City can make the most of this renewed interest in the cities.

Old assumptions  
need  
reexamination,  
new ideas must be  
explored.

There is at least one other compelling reason for a city master plan. Some



matters such as the disposal of solid waste, providing an adequate road and mass transit network, creating and preserving affordable housing and protecting the environment from further degradation require regional cooperation. Economic development, on the other hand, often generates fierce rivalry between municipalities and, sometimes, between states. In either situation, Jersey City can best define and protect its interests and work in concert with neighboring municipalities by clearly establishing needs and desires in a master plan.

One of the key functions of a master plan is the articulation of a community's goals and objectives therefore it is crucial to work for consensus among the different interests represented in the City. A series of public hearings can be held, designed to generate discussion and air differing opinions, to facilitate the search for a shared vision of the future. These meetings can use the draft elements prepared by Urban Research and Design - with vital input from other Departments and Divisions in the City - as the basis of discussion.

This summary offers a picture of the City that is both promising and disturbing. No honest evaluation could do otherwise. Much has been written about the so-called "gold coast" along the Hudson waterfront where land values have soared bringing new office space and luxury housing to the City. Yet, like most of the nation's urban areas, particularly those in the northeast, Jersey City has another side where decent, affordable housing is diminishing, where homelessness, unemployment and disease are on the rise and where municipal efforts to address these problems are hampered by a declining state and federal role in providing financial assistance.

Such problems are not unique to Jersey City. In 1968 the President's National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders - better known as the Kerner Commission - warned that the nation was becoming two



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societies, racially divided and unequal. The commission was created to probe the causes underlying the disturbances which rocked the country's urban areas, including Jersey City. Last year to mark the twentieth anniversary of this report, a distinguished group of citizens formed the 1988 Commission on the Cities to examine the conditions in the nation's urban areas today. The Commission's assessment is sobering. Among its findings:

**Three key concepts:**

**Justice, Quality, Efficiency.**

- Poverty is worse now than it was 20 years with more people, both white and non-white in its ranks;
- Unemployment for blacks is now twice what it is for whites;
- America is again becoming two societies, one black (and Hispanic), one white -- separate and unequal;
- A large and growing urban "underclass" -- principally blacks and Hispanics -- are trapped in the central cities, economically isolated and more socially alienated than ever before; and
- "Quiet riots" can be found in all of the nation's central cities manifested in unemployment, poverty, social disorganization, segregation, family disintegration, housing and school deterioration and more crime.

As Jersey City prepares to put its comprehensive plan together for the first time in two decades, these social issues must be addressed in conjunction with the more traditional land use analysis because each are an integral part of the City. True revitalization of Jersey City must work to improve conditions for all, not a select few.

To accomplish this, it may be useful to have several guiding principles in mind as the master plan process unfolds.



There are at least three key concepts that should form the basis of any goal or action. They are: **Justice, Quality and Efficiency.**

Goals and actions should contribute to a greater measure of justice for all city residents. That which promotes a policy of exclusion or discrimination, including bias on the basis of race, gender, age, physical ability or economic status works against creating a better city for all the people.

Every goal or action should contribute to a standard of quality for Jersey City. This includes excellence in education, health care, housing, public safety, urban design and all other factors that go towards achieving a better standard of living for Jersey City residents.

The master plan should produce goals and actions which help bring about greater efficiency in the operations of city government. Duplication of effort is to be avoided and efficient utilization of resources such as people, money, buildings and land should be a paramount concern.

This process only begins the dialogue. Deciding the course of the City's future and working to ensure that course is followed is a responsibility which rests with all the people.



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## MASTER PLAN: AN ISSUES SUMMARY

### THE PEOPLE

#### Key Issues:

- A 50 year period of population decline leveled off between 1980 and 1985; significant population increase is anticipated
- Growing number of people in the 20-to-40 age groups
- Slight increase in elderly
- Increasing number of female-headed households, particularly below the poverty level
- A more racially diverse city

Indications point to an actual increase in population for the first time in almost sixty years.

Jersey City experienced a decline in population from its peak of 316,715 in 1930 to 223,248 by 1985, as recorded by the Test Census in that year. A changing trend emerged over the first five years of the current decade. There was a slowing in the exodus of people to the suburbs and, with the production of additional housing units throughout the City, indications point to an actual increase in population for the first time in almost sixty years.

Among the changes in the City's population, three age groups, (cohorts) are distinguished by their rate of growth while all others continued to decline. They are the 25-to-34, the 34-to-44 and the 75 and over age groups. Increases in these cohorts are significant because the younger groups are either setting up a household apart from parents or are trading up in the housing market. Consequently demand for housing should remain strong over the next decade. The growing number of persons 75 years-of-age or older may result in the need to expand health care, special housing and nursing home facilities within the City.



Another trend deserving of attention is the increase in female-headed households, particularly among minorities and households with young children. Thirty-five percent of all Black households were headed by a female who also comprised the greatest portion of all families, regardless of race, living in poverty. These are the households who often have the greatest need for affordable housing, health care, educational opportunities, productive work, and recreational activities but who also face the greatest obstacles in securing these needs.

#### LABOR FORCE & LOCAL ECONOMY

##### Key Issues:

- Jersey City unemployment rate remains high; currently 8 percent, twice the regional level
- White-collar jobs in the service sector are growing while blue-collar employment continues to decline
- Retraining displaced blue-collar workers and preparing tomorrow's labor force with the needed skills to compete

Retraining and preparation with new skills are essential to reduce chronic unemployment.

If Jersey City is to realize its full potential, favorable conditions for economic growth must be enhanced. It must be able to keep existing businesses and industries here while also making it possible for others to relocate or start up operations in the City. Diversity is important. It allows for a wide range of employment opportunities and it protects the stability of the economy in times of retrenchment in one industry, as when the financial sector suffered a lag following the October 1987 stock market plunge. The City must also avoid the situation which developed during the 1970's where the only growth in jobs occurred in the public sector.

People need jobs, particularly jobs with advancement opportunities. High



unemployment levels highlight the urgency in this area. Unemployment of Jersey City residents rose from 4 percent in 1970 to almost 10 percent in 1980. Although down to 8 percent in early 1988, the City's unemployment rate is still the highest in the metropolitan region. Retraining of workers to return to the marketplace with new skills and better preparation of today's students for tomorrow's jobs are essential parts of any strategy to reduce the chronic unemployment levels in Jersey City.

Close coordination between the private sector, the unions, the Board of Education and City officials can make this a reality. Curriculum changes and more resources for the public school system will help prepare students when they enter the labor force in a few years.

#### THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

##### Land Use, Zoning & Urban Design

###### Key Issues:

- Waterfront development will continue to raise complex planning issues requiring close coordination between the developers, the City and the community
- The Zoning Ordinance is flawed with contradictory regulations and omissions
- The steady number of variances indicate a need to reexamine both the existing zoning regulations and the established land use policy in the City
- A number of conflicts exist between the Land Use Element Map and the Redevelopment and Zoning Districts Map
- Issues of residential densities and undesirable land uses will continue to be an important issue, particularly where infill development is concerned



- Redevelopment plans will continue to be a major factor in changing the City's waterfront, underscoring the need for continuity between each separate plan and between the plans and the adjacent neighborhoods
- Several redevelopment plans are obsolete; others need to be reexamined against current land use objectives
- Design standards are lacking
- Improvements are needed in monitoring projects as they are developed to ensure compliance with approved plans
- Coordination with the planning efforts of Hudson County will become increasingly important as the county's master plan is formulated and the impact of state planning efforts are analyzed

Commercial and residential development has altered the waterfront landscape

The shift to service industries in the metropolitan area which created a demand for new office space and for housing has made an impact on Jersey City. New office and residential development is occurring both on the Hudson waterfront and in the Journal Square area. The proximity of PATH stations has been a central factor in this emerging pattern. What is most significant about the development is that it is of a scale and intensity heretofore unknown in Jersey City, or the entire Hudson waterfront for that matter. Exchange Place Center, at 37 stories, is the tallest building in New Jersey. Even taller structures are planned. With this transformation of the waterfront, Jersey City is experiencing growth similar to cities such as New York, Chicago and Seattle.

Approximately 18 million square feet of office space is planned for construction in the next ten-to-fifteen years with the potential for an additional 9 million square feet beyond the year 2000.



Residential development has also increased dramatically. Both on the waterfront and in the adjacent neighborhoods in the Downtown ward more than 11,236 new residential units have been created or are in the planning stages. Housing has been created not only through new construction but through the conversion of churches, schools, factories and warehouses into residential structures. A Master Plan presents the opportunity to assess what has transpired in recent years and evaluate the need for changes to continue development in accordance with a set of standards and goals.

#### LAND USE POLICY

Jersey City needs a clear and current land use policy.

Jersey City needs a clear and current land use policy. At present whatever policy exists is fragmented among two land use maps, three city ordinances, forty-six redevelopment plans and the regulations of both a regional and a state agency. It is time to establish an overall development and land use plan for Jersey City. Such a process must start with an evaluation of all the existing regulations and policy statements, assessing the relative strengths and weaknesses of each, in order to achieve the complete integration of all components into a sound planning document for the future.

An evaluation can begin to examine the Zoning Ordinance, the Subdivision Ordinance, the Historic Preservation Ordinance and the forty-six redevelopment plans approved by the Planning Board and City Council to find any inconsistencies or contradictory goals. In some cases revisions will be in order to eliminate objectives or regulations now obsolete. This process will involve making choices, therefore public input is essential. Because the Hackensack Meadowlands Development Commission has jurisdiction over some 800 acres in the northwest portion of the City and the New Jersey Department of Environment Protection has



authority along the Hudson and Hackensack rivers, understanding each entity's role will give the study greater depth.

Once a synthesis of all regulations is complete and policy objectives are defined, the Land Use Element Map and the Redevelopment and Zoning Districts Map can be revised. In addition, the City Council may wish to consider adopting an Official Map, as defined in the Municipal Land Use Law, to give expression to the newly created land use policies. More than the current Land Use Element Map, an Official Map is specifically recognized as a legal document, instrumental in implementing the development and preservation objectives of the community.

The following offers a brief treatment of the topics the land use policy review might focus on.

Land Use Plan:

The Jersey City Planning Board adopted a Land Use Element Map in 1984, but due to the lack of a master plan, the full element was never completed. Eleven types of land uses are identified on this map, fixed into specific districts. Without an accompanying text, it is not possible to know the process which went into creating this map. One point of interest concerns residential density. There is no designation for low density residential development anywhere on the map. While medium density is defined in the index as having a maximum of forty units per acre - only slightly greater than the thirty-five units permitted in the R-1 zone - the question does present itself why a land use policy document would not explicitly recognize low density areas. The issue of residential density will be raised again later in this section.

If the Land Use Element Map is to continue as a guide for land use policies, a number of revisions are in order. Significant discrepancies exist



between the land use distribution promulgated by this map and the actual land uses in place or in the planning stages. Gaps also exist between the Land Use Map and several existing redevelopment plans. In some situations, the land uses in one contradict those promoted by the other. Finally, changes to the Land Use Map showing open space designations along the Hackensack and Hudson rivers would support the completion of public riverfront walkways. Other open space areas might also be called out for specific sections within the developed area of the City.

Zoning Districts / Zone Plan:

A revaluation of the City's zone plan is in order. Both the Zoning Ordinance and the zoning district map, (detailing the residential, commercial, industrial and redevelopment areas), suffer from deficiencies resulting in confusion and public dissatisfaction.

Any revision to the City's zone plan will have to confront the issue of residential density. What should be the appropriate level of density in each of the City's neighborhoods? In a City that has 15,402 persons per square mile, this is an important question. (By means of comparison of 176 U.S. cities with populations over 100,000 in 1984 only New York City, with its five boroughs, Paterson, NJ and San Francisco, CA had higher ratios of persons to land area.) A little more than half the City is zoned for some level of residential use, ranging from low to high density. (This does not include the redevelopment plan areas along the Hudson waterfront which are essentially districts allowing a mix of uses and permit the highest residential levels in Jersey City.)

It might be surprising to discover that despite such a high concentration of people in Jersey City, as reflected in the comparative density levels cited above, ninety percent of the residential



zones in the City are reserved for low-density housing. This fact raises questions about the wisdom in continuing to claim most of the City's residential areas to be low density despite the contrary nature of the existing neighborhoods and in contrast with the practice of granting density variances.

The actual land use patterns in many of the City's neighborhoods exceed the 35 units per acre maximum permitted in low density areas. Many residential sections contain multifamily housing that is both viable and essential to provide a range of housing options within the City. By zoning such areas low density, an important component of housing is relegated to a non-conforming status with serious implications when the opportunity to replace such housing with newer structures at the same density arise.

Between January 1986 and December 1988, the Board of Adjustment had granted 173 variance applications seeking relief from the applicable zoning requirements. On average, this equals almost five variances per month over the three year period. It is an axiom in land use planning that when a continuous pattern of variances are sought - and granted - from the zoning regulations, those regulations are probably outdated and no longer reflective of community needs or market realities.

Significantly, of the 173 variances granted, 77, or 44.5 percent of the total, permitted an increase in density of residential projects. This trend reinforces the finding that zoning and market realities are on different paths. If low density areas are to be preserved, they may have to comprise a smaller portion of the residential zones and have strict performance standards applied against any proposal which seeks to exceed the density ceiling. Otherwise, the current pattern will probably continue leaving the City's zone plan open to constant revision through the adjustment process.



Zoning which bears a closer resemblance to actual land use conditions makes for a more realistic assessment of the development capacities of each district which, in turn allows for better planning of municipal services, infrastructure improvements and overall development.

Zoning Ordinance:

The accelerated pace of development has underscored the need to improve both the Zoning Ordinance and the regulatory process which ensures that City codes are enforced. Jersey City's Zoning Ordinance was signaled out in the 1984 Master Plan Review as deficient in a number of ways. The Review found confusion and omissions in the Definitions section and problems with setback and bulk regulations. In some zones these regulations lack precision or are incomplete. Jersey City's ordinance, which was enacted thirteen years ago and amended in piecemeal fashion at several points, does not address the changes seen in the current development patterns. New land uses such as daycare centers, mixed-use projects, and home occupations raise issues not foreseen back in 1974. Rather than continue amending the existing ordinance each time a problem arises, a completely revised Zoning Ordinance can avoid the conflicts which result from incremental changes.

Changing opinion on what constitutes desirable land uses and the rising number of variance applications indicates that the City's zone plan, and the zoning regulations which enforce that plan, are outdated. Determining what constitutes an undesirable land use can be problematic. Zoning must not be used as an exclusionary tool to promote economic or racial segregation. There is also the "not in my back yard" syndrome. Often referred to as "NIMBY", it is the paradoxical situation where the need for a certain facility is generally accepted but when a location must be determined, the cry goes up to put it in someone's else's neighborhood.



Still, there are changing standards within a community of what is acceptable and what is not. Recent examples in Jersey City suggest that enterprises like motels, video arcades and industrial uses that emit smoke and noxious odors are no longer welcomed in, or near, residential neighborhoods. A review of each zoning category's permitted uses can help define what type of performance standards and what mix of uses best suit the intended purpose of each classification.

#### Redevelopment Plan Areas

More than one-third of the City's land area comes under the jurisdiction of Redevelopment Plans, each with distinct land use categories and regulations. Virtually all of the Hudson waterfront development is located within redevelopment plan areas but the lack of consistency between plans makes comprehensive planning for the waterfront difficult. Where individual plans inhibit the efforts to create design continuity, public access to the riverfront walkway, control over adverse impacts on adjacent Downtown neighborhoods and the creation of a rational transportation system to meet growing demands, those plans are best amended to achieve the desired objectives.

#### Enforcement

Without proper enforcement, good intentions are not enough. In order to ensure compliance and quality, enforcement mechanisms may need to be strengthened or expanded. Given the scale and complexity of present and proposed development and in light of recent examples where developers deviated from the approved site plans, the need for a zoning enforcement staff, sufficient in number and training, becomes evident.



Retail areas must offer a variety of goods and services in a safe and clean environment.

### Urban Design

Urban design has taken on added dimensions. Joining the more traditional concerns of adequate light, air and shadows is an emerging understanding of the importance of facade treatment, signage, lighting, landscaping and integration with the surrounding environment. Putting these elements together can help create a city that has architectural distinction and is also "liveable" for those who reside and work in it. When Kevin Lynch, the noted author and city planner, examined Jersey City in his 1966 work, The Image Of The City, he came away with some negative impressions. Lynch wrote of a city that was drab, dirty and intersected by a confusing street system.

Now, with so much development underway or planned design guidelines can help correct those unfavorable impressions Lynch found twenty-three years ago. Design guidelines are not the complete answer to such conditions but if properly devised and administered, they can make the difference between buildings and streets which are uninviting and banal and those which become points of distinction while also enhancing the surrounding area.

### **RETAIL**

Shopping opportunities in the City range from the small "mom and pop" stores within the many neighborhoods to the national department stores located in the Newport Mall on the waterfront. Smaller, regional chain stores and supermarkets can also be found in the Hudson Mall on the City's western edge, while the Journal Square Central Business District offers a variety of clothing and discount merchandise shops.

Any retail area, regardless of size, must offer a variety of goods and services, a safe and clean environment and good access, either by foot, car or public



transportation if it is to survive. In a recent study by Urban Research and Design, it was apparent that not all commercial areas in the City measured up to these standards. While there is no simple plan to improve each area, better coordination between the merchants and the City is necessary. Many of the neighborhood areas and the Journal Square district are marred with graffiti and litter. Neither the merchants nor the City alone can successfully eliminate such conditions, but a cooperative effort between business associations and City agencies can put an effective clean-up program in place.

Where excessive vacancies exist some contraction of the retail strip may be needed to concentrate stores into distinct commercial nodes. In addition, the merchant assistance programs of the Jersey City Economic Development Corporation can be expanded to assist the small, independent store owner in securing improvement loans and enhancing marketing skills.

Parking is always a major concern among merchants. Despite claims to the contrary, most commercial areas do have adequate parking, both on and off-street. The problem usually is in the management of the spaces and a lack of signage directing the public to the available parking lots. In those areas where a genuine parking deficiency exists, the City, through the Parking Authority, can initiate the process to increase the number of spaces either through a public facility or in conjunction with private developments.

The two retail malls, Newport and Hudson, are large enough to draw shoppers beyond Jersey City's boundaries. As such, they both are designed to accommodate the automobile with internal roadways and parking - decked at Newport and acres on grade at Hudson Mall. Neither place is particularly accessible on foot. To reach Hudson Mall, one must first cross Route 440, a four-lane highway, then a



large parking lot. The highway lacks any defined pedestrian crossing, either on street level or elevated, and there are no designated walkways intersecting the parking lots. At the Newport Mall there are no defined walkways to bring pedestrians through the parking deck, which separates the retail area from the adjacent neighborhoods, into the shopping complex.

Journal Square is known as the City's Central Business District, and in years past it was a place where people came to work, shop or visit a theater. Today it lacks the variety and ambience often associated with a CBD. What is known as Journal Square is actually the junction of two retail strips along Kennedy Boulevard and Bergen Avenue. Fast food establishments, discount merchandise outlets and causal clothes stores comprise most of the retail activity on the two streets.

The only focal point of the Central Business District is the PATH Transportation Center which serves to keep commuters off the streets by incorporating the rail and bus depot under one roof. There are few full service restaurants in the area and no public plazas or green squares to provide relief from the streets and buildings. Further, Journal Square suffers from an image of neglect. Cracked sidewalks, litter and a proliferation of large signs and rooftop billboards are some of the strongest - albeit unattractive - features in the CBD.

There is cause for optimism. New office construction in the center of Journal Square and in the County Courthouse vicinity, several blocks east, indicate a renewed interest in the area. Revisions to the existing zoning, a capital improvement plan to improve the appearance of the streets and sidewalks and a rigorous maintenance program can help to give Journal Square the definition its needs to recapture its



stature as a central place to shop, dine and do business.

## INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Key Issues:

- Declining manufacturing base
- Assessing expansion needs of existing firms and potential for additional industrial development
- Understanding the opportunities for attracting new jobs into the City
- Developing safeguards to protect against industrial pollution and improper handling of hazardous materials

Manufacturing still has an important role in Jersey City.

The regional economic shift from manufacturing to a service-based economy is reflected in the decline of industrial firms in Jersey City. Where fifty percent of the City was once zoned for industrial use, today thirty-nine percent of the total land area remains so designated and a large portion of it - about 800 acres - located in the northwest corner of the City, may be unsuitable for any development because it is largely wetlands.

Manufacturing still plays an important, although smaller role in providing jobs and contributing to the City's tax base. Keeping existing firms in Jersey City and encouraging the growth or relocation of additional industry are priority objectives. Despite the large portion of land zoned for industrial use, some areas of Jersey City are no longer feasible for large manufacturing or shipping facilities. Small shops that require a relatively small amount of space and do not rely on deliveries by tractor trailers may find the older buildings, locked within the City's tight street grid system still viable for their operations. Other firms may need more horizontal than vertical space, thus



leaving them with a choice of expanding within Jersey City if there is room or moving out of the City if there is not.

Finding the proper locations for manufacturing firms is crucial if land use conflicts are to be avoided. Ever since the Comprehensive Plan of 1966, Jersey City has sought to separate industrial uses from residential areas. Grouping these types of firms together in what are known as industrial parks has helped keep industry here while avoiding the more serious land use conflicts but problems remain. Better security and more room for expansion within the industrial parks are important concerns. A complete assessment of the City's industrial sector is overdue as is an examination of each industrial zoning district for its usefulness in future land policies and economic development plans.

When studying the needs of industry, the issue of hazardous materials must be examined because the storage, manufacture or shipment of these materials poses some risk to the community. There are more than sixty industries in Jersey City which have been granted permits to have volatile substances on their premises. With the proximity of industry to residential sections in the City and due to the potential danger created by the presence of combustible and toxic materials, questions of buffer zones, phasing out of non-conforming industrial uses and strict monitoring must be addressed.

### **Environmental Considerations**

#### **Key Issues:**

- Identifying, cleaning and restoring hazardous waste sites to a productive and habitable condition
- Improving air and water quality standards



**Ignorance and neglect of environmental concerns have left a mark.**

- Protecting environmentally sensitive land from overdevelopment

Environmental considerations have become a primary concern, not only for the Jersey City but for the state and nation as well. If efforts are not made to control air, noise and water pollution, to prevent overdevelopment on steep slopes and to avoid the filling of wetlands, the costs to repair the damage at a later stage may be prohibitive, if indeed repairs are even possible.

Hazardous Waste Sites

Jersey City now confronts the consequences of past neglect and/or ignorance with respect to environmental concerns. Chromium, a known carcinogen, and other dangerous materials once used by the manufacturing industries in Jersey City, were commonly used for landfill or simply dumped wherever it was convenient. Today the City is left with at least 100 known toxic waste sites, ranging from corner lots to sites of 20 or more acres. Presently it is too costly to clean all the known sites at once making it imperative that criteria be established to determine where limited resources should be directed and in what order. Where and how the toxic material is stored is another unsettled question. Should a hazardous waste storages facility - a vault as it has been called - be built within City limits? If so, where? Does current technology exist to safely contain metals like chromium which is capable of dissolving concrete and weakening steel?

Air Quality:

The City has not attained desired levels of air quality, as measured by the Department of Environmental Protection, due in large measure to carbon monoxide emissions from motor vehicles. Despite this situation, future waterfront development may bring an additional



40,000 vehicles daily into the Downtown area. If this additional traffic overwhelms the road network creating gridlock conditions, air pollution within Jersey City will undoubtedly grow worse.

What impact the proposed garbage incinerator at Koppers Koke site in Kearny will have on air quality throughout the area is unknown but critics of this disposal method have raised disturbing questions about the ability of these plants to remove dangerous particles from smoke emissions. At the very least, if careful monitoring procedures are in place, unsafe emission levels will be signaled early.

#### Water Quality:

Clean water is the responsibility for all municipalities that border on the Hackensack or the Hudson rivers. Jersey City must do its part by continuing to upgrade its storm and sanitary sewer systems to prevent sewerage discharges into the rivers. Less publicized yet equally deserving of attention is Penhorn Creek, the northern boundary between Jersey City and Secaucus. Heavily contaminated with chromium and mercury, this waterway, and the land surrounding it, has limited value in its current state. New development or recreational opportunities might exist, particularly for hiking and boating, if this area is restored.

#### Steep Slopes

Development on slopes with a gradient over twelve percent can cause adverse environmental effects. For this reason, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service recommends protective measures. Guarding steep slopes from intensive development has an additional advantage in Jersey City. Impressive views exist on both the east and west edges of the City, from the Palisades and the western slope, respectively. A topography that ranges

A commitment to a clean, safe environment is an investment in the future.



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from ten feet above sea level at the Hudson and Hackensack rivers to more than 150 feet in the City's northern ward -- aptly referred to as "the Heights" -- makes these views possible.

Jersey City already has an Environmental Commission and dedicated individuals working on these issues. Incorporating within the Master Plan a strong commitment to a clean, safe environment, is perhaps one of the most important contributions the community can make towards its future.

## HOUSING

### Key Issues:

- Preserve existing supply of affordable housing
- Establish policies to create additional affordable housing units
- Increase opportunities and choices for those with few options
- Develop housing and related services for "special needs" population

Decent and affordable housing is a fundamental human need. In a housing market such as Jersey City's, where at least 30 percent of renters pay more than 35 percent of their income for rent, this need is not fully met. Using different measures, the scope of that need ranges from almost 6,000 households, (as calculated by The New Jersey Council On Affordable Housing) to 20,000 households, (from the City's own Housing Element). The Housing Element figure is much more closely related to a cost/income ratio, where the Council's number was determined through a complicated statistical system. Despite the range between the two, both indices point to the inability of thousands of residents to secure housing at reasonable costs. For those who qualify for the City's public housing

Decent and  
affordable  
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need.



units, a wait of three to six years, (depending on the number of bedrooms required) exists. Escalating rents and evictions due to condominium conversion remove affordable units from the market. Substandard conditions reduce others to become housing of the last resort, occupied only because the tenant lacks any choice. Warehousing of apartments - the illegal practice of keeping habitable units vacant - also remove those units which could otherwise be kept in the market and occupied. In this cycle of diminishing housing supply what remains costs more.

Twin goals are to protect the existing supply while also implementing strategies to finance construction of new units. Jersey City has no shortage of luxury housing. In fact recent surveys indicate that part of the market has reached a saturation point. But despite claims to the contrary the construction of luxury housing has not resulted in the "trickling down" of existing units to low and moderate income households. Thus preserving existing units and generating more affordable housing requires greater assistance from the public sector.

In preserving the existing supply, both renters and homeowners face difficult, if somewhat different, problems. Tenants need protection from unconscionable rent increases and security from eviction when buildings are converted to condominiums. Homeowners, particularly those residents living on a fixed income, need relief from escalating property taxes. The City should take the necessary steps to ensure that the tax burden is equally shared and fairly administered. Collection of delinquent taxes and the formulation of tax abatement policies used to attract new development are also required. Beyond that, local officials can offer their support to the recommendations of the New Jersey State and Local Expenditure Revenue Policy Commission's report which calls for fundamental changes in the property tax system in this state.



New construction will take money. Housing linkage programs, like the voluntary system currently practiced in Jersey City and the use of Regional Contribution Agreements to finance new and rehabilitated residential units are elements of the creative strategies already proven successful. There is little doubt, however, that without a greater role by the state and federal government, sufficient capital will not be available to meet the growing need for housing.

The City's efforts to assist in the preservation and development of affordable housing through assistance to non-profit groups and innovative programs such as the Tenant Interim Lease Program deserve continued support. In total, without greater resources put at its disposal, the City will continue to be in a position of managing, not solving, the critical lack of affordable housing.

**PARKS, RECREATION & URBAN OPEN SPACE**

**PARKS**

**Key Issues:**

- Municipal parks vary in the quality of amenities and the level of maintenance
- Responsibility for park system is fragmented; coordination of administration, maintenance and services is lacking
- Improvements in the park system includes the upgrading of Lincoln Park and the other county facilities within Jersey City
- Liberty State Park has a special responsibility to provide the open space and recreational needs of Jersey City residents

Parks and open space are critically important in an urban environment. Standards established by the National



Recreation and Parks Association and by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection call for between eight-to-ten acres of parkland for every one thousand residents. The City has fifty parks totaling 140 acres, equalling less than one acre per thousand persons. Factoring in Liberty State Park along the southern waterfront and Lincoln Park, under the county's jurisdiction on the West Side, the ratio is about six acres per one thousand residents, still under the recommended amount.

**Parks, recreation  
and open space  
enrich the City.**

Any action the City takes to correct this situation requires an understanding of several concepts. Neighborhood parks should be easy to reach, plentiful in number, safe and well-maintained. Planning new parks is important but properly administering the existing inventory cannot be neglected. Money and additional staff are part of the solution but additional measures may also be necessary including some imaginative approaches done successfully in other cities, notably New York, Boston and Philadelphia, where direct citizen involvement has made a major difference.

If the county and state parks are to be credited as contributing to the needs of Jersey City residents then those facilities must offer something to the local population and not create conditions or facilities which exclude any segment of the City's population on the basis of cost or access. Close coordination between City officials and the county and state authorities is essential in this regard.

## RECREATION

### Key Issues:

- The City's recreational policies deserve examination to determine if a greater range of programs can be offered
- Year-round programs for males and



females of all ages can broaden the participation of Jersey City residents in constructive leisure activities

- More coordination with the park system and the Board of Education can maximize potential of recreational programs

Recreational programs in Jersey City have increasingly become the responsibility of private entities and non-profit agencies. Jersey City should reassess its role in this area. If the City takes the lead in providing year-round recreational activities - both athletic sports and other, non-traditional pursuits - it can address the problems that arise when people, particularly young people, do not have constructive outlets for their leisure time.

Effective management is essential. Combining the management of the City's parks and recreation programs may provide better coordination of effort and more efficient use of resources. Greater use of public facilities and schools and corporate sponsorship are resources whose potential remains untapped.

## URBAN OPEN SPACE

### Key Issues:

- Plazas, public seating areas, mini-parks, pedestrian links and riverfront walkways are part of an open space network which can enhance the City
- Areas of particular concern include defined view corridors, the two riverfronts and the central business district

Typically, parks come to mind when discussing open space, but relief from the urban environment of concrete and asphalt can be found in a variety of forms. Plazas, public squares, pedestrian malls and riverfront walkways



are all examples of space set aside for a relaxing stroll or a place to take lunch. Cities that attract people have such spaces. Boston's Quincy Market and its waterfront esplanade along the Charles River, Nicollet Mall in Minneapolis, and the small but extremely popular Paley Park in midtown Manhattan are just a few examples.

Jersey City has also begun to recognize the benefits of planning public open space as seen in the efforts to develop the waterfront walkways along both the Hackensack and Hudson rivers and the creation of Owen Grundy Park at Exchange Place. More of this is needed. Journal Square is the City's central business district and a focal point for new office construction. With the exception of the interior courtyard in the PATH Transportation Center, the CBD does not have any public space for office workers, shoppers or visitors to relax during lunch hours or find a place to sit away from the street.

These are the type of amenities which lend an air of distinction to a city but experience demonstrates they do not come about by accident. Establishing support for public open space, public art and civic monuments in the new Master Plan is a good way to lay the basic groundwork. Specifics concerning the proper location and proportion can be addressed in a revised zone plan.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

The City's infrastructure needs to be modernized.

New development attracts attention. It gives the impression of progress and interest in the City and its future. If this progress is to be realized, equal attention must be given to the roads, sewers and potable water lines which makes it possible to build and sustain the development. Upgrading, repair, replacement and expansion of the City's infrastructure are key factors in the future growth plans for Jersey City.



RoadsKey Issues:

- The local road network in the Downtown area is not designed to accommodate the level of traffic expected from proposed waterfront development
- Understanding the impact resulting from increasing the capacity of the existing road system or the creation of new roadways in the City precedes any major changes. It will be increasingly important to measure the effect of these options on existing neighborhoods, air quality, noise levels and parking capacity - both on- and off-street
- Development of a road hierarchy system is necessary to guide development patterns

The millions of square feet of office space and the thousands of residential units anticipated for the waterfront and other parts of the City will bring in more traffic each day than the present road network can handle. Without some major changes the City will face road gridlock in the morning and evening rush hours. The options include increasing the capacity of the existing roads through widening and better signalization, construction of new roads and connectors to the New Jersey Turnpike, improvement and expansion of mass transit facilities, implementation of ridesharing programs and satellite parking. Some of these options are mutually exclusive; some can work together in a number of combinations. Assessing the impact of each upon the City can better determine which approach is most feasible.

If the current parking ratio policies are continued, some additional 40,000 vehicles can be expected to enter the City each day, mostly headed for the waterfront as the proposed development is built out. Considering the forty minute



waits and mile-long lines the Port Authority projects for New York City bound commuters on this side of the Holland Tunnel within three years, a rather dim picture emerges for the future. Overcrowded arterial roads will result in traffic spilling over into residential neighborhoods with likely adverse effects on air quality standards and the general quality of life in these areas. Costs to maintain and police these roads will also increase. Left unplanned, this situation could ultimately result in a stifling of the market as employers and workers look elsewhere for a more rational commutation system.

Important choices face the City in planning for the transportation needs of the future. Solutions must be found to improve vehicular and pedestrian movement, both in and through the City. Because of its particular location, Jersey City is also a regional transportation hub. Planning for future transportation needs must recognize this fact. Any advantages in expanding the existing road network or in constructing new highway linkages must carefully evaluate the disadvantages to the City in general and the impacted neighborhoods in particular. Will additional road capacity invite more cars into and through Jersey City, aggravating the existing air pollution conditions? What will be the effect on the quality of life in terms of noise, congestion and competition for parking if new or expanded roads increase traffic flows through residential streets? Improvement in the circulation system is a key factor in the City's continued progress but it must not override all other considerations.

#### Mass Transit

#### Key Issues:

- Bus transportation in and through the City can be improved by increasing



service to the Hudson waterfront, publication and distribution of schedules and rider transfer programs

- Options to improve transportation to and along the waterfront including light rail and express bus routes, will require increased coordination of planning efforts between the City, county, state and bi-state agencies.

If the waterfront is to develop and function without the chaos of traffic jams and massive parking decks, public mass transit options need to be broadened. Much study has already been done on bus and light rail systems. Money to finance mass transit is always the stumbling point. As more development increases demand along the waterfront, assessment fees may become a primary means of securing the funds to implement some version of a trolley or light rail network.

Without improvements in public mass transit, there is little hope of reducing vehicular traffic in and through the City. Bus and rail routes are also critically important for those who do not have access to an automobile. By increasing mobility, public transit increases possibilities for work, housing and recreation.

#### Pedestrian Linkages

##### Key Issues:

- Sidewalk improvement program
- Creating safe and inviting pedestrian links across City streets and highways

Maintaining sidewalks in good repair throughout the City reduces the hazards and obstacles pedestrians face when walking. Sidewalks, (and curbs) left in disrepair also contribute to an image of neglect, which coupled with litter and



graffiti, detract from a commercial area or a residential street. Regular maintenance and prompt repairs of broken concrete can have a positive rippling effect.

Much attention is given to the importance of improving vehicular flow throughout the City. Overlooked at times is the need to improve pedestrian access as well. People who walk, either by choice or by circumstance, should be able to reach their destination without competing with fast moving traffic. They are also entitled to have access to any public area within the City, including riverfront walkways and piers. Defined crosswalks, better signalization, and signs can work to improve present conditions.

The problems of pedestrian access to the City's two shopping malls were discussed in the Retail section, making repetition here unnecessary. At least two other areas would benefit from improvement: Journal Square and the riverfront walkways. As the City's Central Business District, Journal Square should be an inviting place to walk but this is not always the case. Planting curbside trees, better control over sidewalk newspaper machines and the replacement of the chainlink fence on the central median of the Square with something more aesthetically appealing would help greatly. The first step, however, is to meet a higher standard for sidewalk and street maintenance and to design better crosswalks to improve pedestrian safety.

A proposal had been floated to erect an elevated walkway linking the PATH Transportation Center with the west side of Kennedy Boulevard. This may be a solution that brings new problems in its wake. Elevated walkways, first used in Minnesota to shield people from the harsh North winds, have become fashionable in many cities. However, keeping people away from the street can have deleterious effects on the character of the area and for the shops that depend on the passerby



for business. Streets are often safer with a concentration of people on them, not above them. It has been argued that the decline of Journal Square was related to the creation of the PATH Transportation Center which keeps commuters inside its walls as they change buses and trains. This development removes the "critical mass" of people on the streets that is so important to retail establishments. Improving the streets, not ignoring them, is the key to a vibrant city center.

With new development along the Hudson and some open space possibilities along the Hackensack, riverfront walkways are becoming realities in Jersey City. There are many good esplanades in American cities to serve as examples for the City's two rivers. In Boston, the walkway along the Charles River attracts thousands of tourists each year. Closer to home, the walkways at Brooklyn Heights and Battery Park City, both in New York represent the finest use of riverfront territory. Now is the time to implement walkway plans before opportunities are lost to the City forever.



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## UTILITIES

### Sanitary & Storm Water Sewers

#### Key Issues:

- The City's sewer system is old and in need of constant maintenance and repair
- Combined storm water and sanitary sewer pipes reduce the overall efficiency of the system
- Installation of new outfalls and the separation of storm water and sanitary waste pipes are underway along the Hudson waterfront
- Jersey City will no longer treat sanitary waste in its own facilities; instead it will be sent to a regional treatment plant across the Newark Bay.

Upgrading roads,  
sewers and water  
mains is a top  
priority

The sewer lines throughout Jersey City are old - some were installed a century ago - and carry combined sanitary waste and storm water runoff which reduces the efficiency of the system. Constant repair and upgrading of the pipes is a constant task and will likely continue to be the case as replacement of the entire City's sewer and storm water drainage system would be prohibitively expensive.

Where new lines can be installed without major disruption, such as on the Hudson waterfront, the two systems can be separated. Close coordination between all City offices in putting the improvements in place must be a primary objective.

Jersey City is in the process of converting its two treatment plants into pumping stations to send sanitary waste to the Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission, (PVSC) in Newark via a pipeline under the Newark Bay. Limited to a ceiling of 50 million gallons per day, (mgd) on a contract running for 25 years, this arrangement will influence the pace and overall capacity of



development in the City. Even with the ceiling of 50 mgd, this link with a regional treatment facility will greatly improve the level of treatment and bring projects on line much faster.

#### Solid Waste

- Incineration and recycling emerge as alternatives to landfilling garbage

Efficient and cost-effective ways to dispose of solid waste presents some difficult problems as the landfills in the Hackensack Meadowlands reach design capacity. Out-of-state dumping will be considerably more expensive, a cost directly translated to local property tax bills. Two alternatives are being implemented to reduce or eliminate the need to landfill garbage: recycling and incineration. Both of these measures raise questions that merit prompt attention. Efforts must be made to control any adverse effects from these facilities on their immediate neighbors. Truck traffic, debris, noxious emissions or other negative impacts should be anticipated and plans made to control or eliminate them.

#### Potable Water

##### Key Issues:

- Replacement of water main lines throughout the City
- Replacement of holding reservoir with storage tank
- Expansion of reservoir system
- Extending service to new waterfront development

Jersey City's Department of Water operates and maintains two storage reservoirs in Morris County and more than 286 miles of pipeline which bring the water from the reservoirs to the City and



distribute it throughout the municipality. Upgrading this system in order to guarantee quality water service to Jersey City residents is the primary objective for the future.

A multi-year program to replace water mains, many of which were put in place almost 100 years ago, is now underway. Increased service to the Hudson waterfront development is also in the implementation stages. The Department of Water also plans to replace the holding reservoir adjacent to Pershing Field with a storage tank. Once the existing reservoir is drained, the future of the site will be subject to intense scrutiny. This is just one of the many subjects a new land use policy must address.

#### Impact Fees

##### **Key Issues:**

- Close attention to emerging case law is necessary as impact fees are more frequently used to finance improvements in the City's infrastructure

Making changes or expanding the City's infrastructure is extremely expensive. Assessing developers to pay for the infrastructure improvements necessitated by proposed projects has become an accepted method for communities to manage growth effectively. Governor Kean's Office of Policy and Planning studied the potential for assessing waterfront development in Hudson County and concluded that impact fees could be imposed with no negative effect on the marketability of the projects.

Jersey City recently enacted an impact fee ordinance to assess for road and sewer improvements. In light of rulings by the U.S. Supreme Court and the Supreme Court of New Jersey, special caution is advisable in this area. Unless a clear relationship is shown between the development and the improvement desired, impact fees cannot be levied. Knowing



the limits of the existing systems and the scope of needed improvements must be understood before implementing any impact fee system. In taking this approach the City is not only adhering to the requirements of case law, it is also laying out a framework of how it expects to grow in terms of scale and density. Projections for future development can then be analyzed in a more rational manner. If impact fees are to be used effectively in Jersey City, a thorough Capital Improvement Plan, linked to the objectives identified in the Master Plan, is a fundamental prerequisite.

## MUNICIPAL SERVICES

### Public Safety

#### Key Issues:

- Renovation and new construction will be needed to modernize the City's police and fire stations and to expand service to developing areas
- New training facilities for the police and fire departments are needed to replace existing ones rendered obsolete by age or location

Police and fire stations need to be replaced.

Age and deteriorated conditions characterize most of the police and firehouses in Jersey City. Fourteen of the existing sixteen firehouses were built between 1840 and 1910. The stations are too small for modern trucks and other equipment; the living quarters and on-site parking for the firefighters are inadequate. The four district police precincts are also in need of renovation or replacement.

The fire training academy must relocate from its place along Droyer's Point while the police training academy needs additional classroom space apart from its present facilities on the top floors of the North District Station. The Police Department's Emergency Services Bureau will also be forced to move once the



Municipal Court building on Britton Street is vacated and sold.

Additionally, the motorcycle patrol division needs storage facilities and the Fire Department needs docking space if it is to have a fireboat to serve the Hudson River waterfront.

Placement of new facilities can be determined, in part, on the basis of where those facilities will have the greatest impact. Standards exist for the proper distribution of police and fire stations to provide adequate public safety. Locational decisions on police and fire stations should also take into account the positive impact such facilities have upon a neighborhood.

Because so many public safety facilities will need replacement, careful indexing of locational factors can make rational decisions in this area much easier. Decisions will likewise have to be made concerning those facilities which are vacated. As an alternative to selling off public facilities as they are vacated, the buildings should be evaluated for other community-related purposes.

### Health Care

#### Key Issues:

- Jersey City will no longer have a public hospital offering free health care to its residents
- The site of the new Medical Center is in dispute, delaying both the construction of the new complex and the adaptation of the existing facility for other uses
- Jersey City has one of the nation's highest rate of Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) as a result of a substantial population of intravenous drug users



- In 1986, 11 percent of all women who gave birth in Jersey City were 18 years-of-age or younger as compared to 7 percent for Hudson County and 6 percent state-wide
- Jersey City had a higher infant mortality rate than Hudson County or New Jersey in 1986
- The rate of gonorrhea and syphilis in Jersey City were double that of Hudson County and almost three times that of the state

These indices of need create a challenge to all those in the area of health care. While easy solutions don't present themselves, education, preventative programs and adequate clinical facilities are the ingredients in improving the well-being of Jersey City residents.

**Preventative measures and adequate health care are in critical need.**

The existing Medical Center is scheduled to be replaced with a modern hospital, but it will be privately run as opposed to the public status of the current facility. Legal disputes over the proposed site for the new complex has prevented any progress on this issue even though state health officials have approved the new hospital's certificate of need. Alternate sites should be evaluated or site layout plans should be modified if no quick resolution of this issue is likely. In any proposal for the new hospital it would be best to plan a medical center district with provisions for medical offices, medical staff housing and ancillary services.

Plans to convert the existing Medical Center complex should be updated. Any plans should evaluate the feasibility of converting the buildings to serve a public need, including mixed-income housing development.

There are people in Jersey City, as in many urban centers of the United States, who suffer from inadequate health care, aggravated by poverty and declining social and medical services. Health care



planning in this City faces a number of formidable challenges. A new hospital is necessary and a medical center district can make it new source of pride for the City but the real issue will be the ability to improve the health and well-being of all the City's residents.

## LIBRARIES

### Key Issues:

- Broadening the library system through cooperative programs with the Board of Education
- Evaluating the feasibility of continuing to rent private space for library branches
- Expanding services to developing areas and widening the cultural and ethnic scope of the services

Maintenance of the existing system will serve to keep the City's library system up to its high standards. This Plan also recommends that a review be done of publicly-owned buildings to determine if any library branches now situated in privately-owned space can be relocated to City or county-owned buildings. This study should offer a cost/benefit analysis between the two options.

The Jersey City library system has approximately one million volumes, or about four books per person in the City. In order to bring more of the City's residents in contact with the library's many services, plans for better coordination with the Jersey City public school system should be implemented. A new branch located within the Hudson waterfront development area and a new International branch, reflecting the ethnic and cultural diversity of the City, would also serve this aim.



## CULTURAL FACILITIES

### Key Issues:

- Exploring the diverse cultural interests in Jersey City
- Determining the needs beyond existing programs

There are many cultural institutions in proximity to Jersey City. New York City is a center for cultural activity with a wide range of museums, concert halls and theaters. Newark, New Jersey has been selected as the site for a state cultural center, housing a symphony orchestra and performance halls. What then are the needs within Jersey City for cultural facilities?

Auditoriums do exist in the City's libraries and in local public and private schools and colleges for performances and other events. There is also the restored railroad terminal in Liberty State Park which serves as the site for an annual ethnic festival. Private efforts in this area include an attempt to restore the Majestic Theater directly across from City Hall and an effort to convert the Leows Theater in Jersey City into a functional arts center. The dispute over the Leows Theater illustrates the difficulty of determining the use of specific facilities without first deciding what level of public commitment if necessary to sustain a cultural arts program in the City.

Understanding the range of cultural diversity in Jersey City is an important first step. Musical groups, theater and dance companies, poets, painters and writers have different needs and appeal to different audiences.

The demand for space and financial resources depend on the type of activity in mind. Obviously the requirements for a full symphony orchestra differ greatly from those of a community-based poetry or dance ensemble. What range of activities



are desired, what presently exists and what level of support, both public and private, will it take to sustain any changes from the present conditions? Once this needs assessment is done and is evaluated against existing programs, a more complete programs can be designed.

## SCHOOLS

- Aging public school buildings
- Enrollments down but overcrowded classrooms persist
- Continued high drop-out rate
- State takeover of public school system imminent
- Impact of new residential development on the public school system

Greater levels of literacy and technical skills are the tools of the future.

The problems facing Jersey City's public school system are not unique to this City. Deteriorating buildings, high drop-out rates and low test scores are common features of urban school districts not only in New Jersey but throughout the nation as well. Even as these difficulties continue, the importance of a high school education grows in importance in this society. The shift from a manufacturing-based economy to one powered by information and services, requires much greater levels of literacy and technical training than in the past. If the children of Jersey City are to succeed in this changing environment, the public school system is the place where the necessary preparation must take place.

A possible takeover of the school district by the State Board of Education has been the focus of attention and debate but another aspect of the public school problem has not received as much notice, at least on a policy level. This is the growing obsolescence of the buildings and facilities themselves. Fifteen of the twenty-seven public



grammar schools were built prior to World War II and almost half of those date back to the turn of the century. Trailers serving as auxiliary classrooms sit on the playgrounds of a number of the City's schools. This growing deterioration of the structures together with recent findings of chromium which have caused the temporary closing of one elementary school illustrate the scope of the program. A plan for the school system must consider the possibility of new construction or at least major renovation to its aging plant.

To help determine an answer to this question, estimates are needed regarding the City's future school-age population. Urban Research and Design, together with Board of Education officials are presently working on such estimates. Part of the equation includes the impact of parochial school closings as well. Making the right choices in this area means more than investing scant financial resources wisely. A sound school system is a commitment to the youth of Jersey City as well as an investment in the City's future.

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION

### Key Issues:

- Preserving the City's historic districts
- Finding a harmonious balance between new development and the historic features of the City's many neighborhoods

Jersey City has four designated historic districts and a newly enacted Historic Preservation Ordinance to protect against intrusive development. The ordinance may not be enough. A new land use policy will also help protect these districts and other historically significant sites within the City by emphasizing the interrelationship of the old with the new. Sensitive treatment of the areas

The richness of the City's past enhances its future.



surrounding these districts will help ensure a harmonious coexistence between the brownstones and rowhouses in the districts with the modern highrise structures now defining the waterfront. As recent events show, both the developers and the residents in the districts can work together, under the auspices of the Planning Board, to the benefit of all.

If development throughout the rest of the City works to complement rather than challenge the historic qualities in many of the City's neighborhoods, a more appealing environment will result. Appreciation for the City's history, as expressed in the some of the outstanding architecture found in each neighborhood, is something every resident can be proud of.



## CONCLUSION

Any plan that seeks to address a broad range of issues in a comprehensive way must be crafted with great care. Competing priorities and diverse interests will have to be considered as the goals for the plan are determined. If the Master Plan is to be a real instrument in guiding policy rather than the proverbial report gathering dust on a shelf, it must reflect the concerns of the community. That can best occur if the people who make up that community have input as the plan is drafted.

In order to solicit ideas and suggestions from the people of Jersey City, the Planning Board can schedule a series of public hearings during which the subjects explored in this summary will be examined in much greater depth. These public forums can build upon a number of preliminary goals, objectives and strategies which now comprise the draft elements of the plan. After review by all interested parties, the Master Plan should be ready for formal submission to the Planning Board in late 1989. Because a January 1990 deadline for a finished product is made necessary by regulations in the Municipal Land Use Law, the next six months will require a concentrated effort by elected officials, technical staff and the residents of Jersey City to shape a plan all can claim an investment in.

As the next century draws closer there are a host of issues to be addressed. These include protecting the natural environment, providing quality education, maintaining public safety, increasing health care, expanding affordable housing, creating jobs, and maintaining a high standard in the community's quality of life. Jersey City's new Master Plan can assist in this formidable task by setting out what the vision of the City might be and what steps need to be taken to make that vision a reality.







DATE DUE

JAN BEX READING

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